

**Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success**  
**Early Elementary Subgroup**  
**February 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Notes**

*Webinar Attendees:*

Steven Staples, Superintendent, Dept of Education (Chair)  
Patricia Popp, Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
Jim Baldwin, VA Association of Elementary School Principals  
Dora Wynn, Brunswick County Public Schools  
Burnette Scarboro, NOVA PTA  
Shannon Venable, Dominion  
Dr. Antoinette Rogers, VEA  
Deborah Jonas Deborah Jonas, Research & Analytic Insights and Chewing Research Fellow at VECF  
Kathy Glazer, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF)  
Amanda Williford, UVA Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning  
Lisa Howard, Elevate Early Education (E3)

**Presentations on Kindergarten Readiness Assessments**

**Deborah Jonas, Chewing Research Fellow at VECF, [Djonas@ResearchAnalyticInsights.com](mailto:Djonas@ResearchAnalyticInsights.com), 804-252-5714**  
[Presentation Slides](#)  
[Final Report](#)

*Summary:*

-Wanted to examine the feasibility of incorporating a multi-dimensional assessment into Kindergarten classrooms and use it to inform efforts focused on strengthening children's early learning experiences.

*The Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Tool:*

- Pilot used a customized version of GOLD, aligned to Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning and SOL's
  - 2 content areas (literacy, mathematics).
  - 4 developmental areas (social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive).
- Designed to facilitate developmentally-appropriate, ongoing, observation-based assessment during regular classroom activities.
- Intended use is embedded into the teaching and learning process—not a separate paper/pencil or task-based assessment

*Pilot:*

- 14 school divisions
- 32 schools
- 79 classrooms serving ~1440 children from diverse communities
- Teachers ranged from novice (first- and second-year teachers) to veterans (teaching 30 or more years)

*Results:*

- Parents valued comparative data, know how their kids fared against others
- Teachers recognized and valued a holistic approach to children
- Teachers grew in consistency in their ability to reliably administer it throughout course of the year, but needed skill building in observation-based measures
- Survey and interview data made clear that the majority of pilot classrooms were not set up to support multi-dimensional, observation-based assessment.

*Recommendations:*

- Just like SOL Reform, Virginia needs a robust, multi-stakeholder, statewide conversation about how we want to structure these important early years in education.
- A strategic approach is critical, with curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom structure, incentives and expectations aligned with academic and developmental learning goals.



-Defining the assessment piece of this puzzle in isolation can have unintended and in some cases predictable consequences.

*Discussion:*

- Kindergarten expectations will help inform pre-k curricula and expectations
- Teachers and schools are reluctant to try assessments, we might consider how to track how children learn when freed from the SOL constraints and compare to how those tied to SOL's are doing
- There is a need to better inform how teachers do their jobs to ensure all students are meeting expectations
- TS Gold as a complement to PALS helps focus on social and emotional learning as well in a feasible way
- How much time did it take teachers to complete? A lot of variability.

***Amanda Williford, Assistant Research Professor, UVA Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning,  
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Final Report

*Summary:*

- Wanted to determine feasibility and capture snapshot of how kids are doing throughout the Commonwealth
- Describe the ways in which children and classrooms vary in readiness skills
- Present recommendations to implement a statewide comprehensive readiness assessment

*Assessment Tools:*

The selected measures included:

- a) the Tools for Early Assessment in Mathematics-Short Form (TEAM-SF) - a 20-item, teacher-administered direct assessment of preschool children's number and geometric/spatial competencies; and,
  - b) the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) - a 17-item rating scale completed online by the teacher that measures children's self-regulation skills (e.g., follow classroom rules, concentrate on activities,) and social skills (e.g., cooperate with peers, comply with adult directives).
- Teachers conducted these additional readiness assessments immediately prior to their administration of PALS
  - Domains aligned with VA Foundation Blocks and Standards of Learning
  - Data with longitudinal potential
  - Administered right before doing the PALS (w/in 2 weeks of PALS, which are required in first 6 weeks of Kindergarten)

*Pilot:*

The participating teachers and children included 2,036 kindergarten students drawn from 100 classrooms and 41 schools within 16 districts across the eight superintendents' regions of Virginia.

*Results:*

- Thirty-four percent of children entering kindergarten in Virginia are lacking key skills in at least one early learning domain. This multi-skill estimate falls in stark contrast to rates of readiness based solely on literacy, i.e. PALS, which estimates that approximately 12% of students statewide enter kindergarten unprepared.
- Children enter school less "ready" in self-regulation and social skills than in literacy and math.
- Schools serving more economically disadvantaged students enrolled more children identified as "not ready." Boys, younger children, English Language Learners, and children who had an Individualized Education Plan were more often identified as "not ready."
- Teachers can assess a broader array of readiness skills and find having this data useful but note concerns around loss of instruction time.

*Recommendations:*

1. Skills beyond literacy should be included in Virginia's kindergarten readiness assessments. There is great value in understanding kindergarten readiness in Virginia beyond early literacy skills.
2. Implement a voluntary, statewide rollout of a comprehensive readiness battery.
  - a. Build consensus among stakeholders
  - b. Finalize assessment protocol and teacher assessment training
  - c. Develop an integrated data system
  - d. Make data useful for teachers



- e. Provide teachers with training around individualized instructional strategies linked to readiness data
- 3. Target social-emotional skills for early intervention prior to and within kindergarten.
  - a. Developing social-emotional learning standards for K-12 students
  - b. Providing teacher training on evidence-based strategies for supporting social-emotional learning
- 4. Use kindergarten readiness assessments to make data-driven policy decisions.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

February 18, 2015 at 1pm in Conference Room 1 of the Patrick Henry Building; and via conference call: 866-842-5779 and with pass code 4399398107 (*This will include a kindergarten teacher panel presentation and a full discussion of kindergarten readiness issues*)

March 4, 2015 at 1pm Webinar (Fairfax early Literacy Program and Prek Summer camp presentations; plus Kindergarten data (retention rates, # pre-school experience) from VDOE)

March 30, 2015 at 2pm in Conference Room 1 of the Patrick Henry Building and via conference call: 1-866-842-5779 and with pass code: 8047865834 *\*Please note the date and conference number change\** (Achievement Gap discussion and development of preliminary areas of focus for recommendations)

May 4, 2015 3-5pm: Meeting of the full Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success, West Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building, 1111 East Broad Street Richmond, VA 23219